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Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping forces in the Middle East: United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

Financing of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon for the period from 1 July 2006 to 31 March 2007

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on the financing of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for the period from 1 July 2006 to 31 March 2007 (A/61/588). During its consideration of the report, the Advisory Committee met with the representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information.

2. By its resolution 1701 (2006), the Security Council decided, in order to supplement and enhance the Force in numbers, equipment, mandate and scope of operations, to authorize an increase in the force strength of UNIFIL to a maximum of 15,000 troops. By the same resolution, the Council extended the mandate of the Force until 31 August 2007; and decided that the mandate of the Force, in addition to carrying its mandate under resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978), would include monitoring of the cessation of hostilities, accompanying and supporting the deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), as they deployed through southern Lebanon and assisting the Government of Lebanon in securing its borders and other entry points.

3. In the report under consideration, the Secretary-General indicates that a new budget for UNIFIL for the period from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007 will be submitted to the General Assembly during the first part of its resumed sixty-first session, with a view to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), in particular, the rapid reinforcement of the Force, and taking into account the time required for the preparation of the result-based frameworks and the determination of the full resource requirements for the 2006/07 period, as well as for their legislative review (A/61/588, para. 5).

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4. Pending submission of the above-mentioned budget for UNIFIL for the period from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007, including result-based frameworks, the Secretary-General is requesting that the General Assembly grant commitment authority with assessment for the period from 1 July 2006 to 31 March 2007 in the amount of $263.4 million, pursuant to section IV, paragraph 2, of its resolution 49/233 A. That amount is inclusive of the amount of $50 million previously authorized by the Advisory Committee to meet the immediate and essential expansion requirements of the Force and is in addition to the amount of $93.5 million already appropriated under the terms of Assembly resolution 60/278 for the maintenance of UNIFIL for the period from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007.

5. **In its report of 9 November 2006, the Advisory Committee commented extensively on the increasing tendency to resorting to commitment authority with assessment (see A/61/567, paras. 6-11). The Committee pointed out that routine use of that mechanism represented a departure from good budget practice and discipline. The Committee once again stresses that commitment authority should constitute a short-term funding bridge mechanism pending the timely submission of fully detailed and justified budgets.**

6. **The Committee trusts that future recourse to the mechanism of commitment authority with assessment will be limited to the use for which it was envisaged. The Committee also trusts that, in the future, on the basis of its considerable experience with peacekeeping budgets, the Secretariat will apply the budget discipline required.**

7. The Advisory Committee notes that a number of budgetary details have been provided in the report of the Secretary-General on the financing of UNIFIL, although a request for commitment authority is not supposed to be presented as a budget. Some of those details have been provided without the accompanying justification. **The Committee cautions the Secretariat not to present de facto budgets in connection with requests for commitment authority because the Committee should not be expected to base its budgetary analysis on incomplete data.**

8. Nevertheless, in the paragraphs below, the Committee makes a series of observations and recommendations with regard to the levels of commitment authority and assessment for the period from 1 July 2006 to 31 March 2007, as well as other matters. These should also be taken into account in the preparation of the budget submission for UNIFIL for the period from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007.

9. The Secretary-General indicates in his report that the expansion of the mandate of UNIFIL will entail adjustments in the organization and deployment pattern of the Force. In addition to the new maritime area of operations, which will extend 43 nautical miles east to west and 120 nautical miles north to south of the coast of Lebanon, the land area of operation has been expanded north to the boundary of the Litani River, an addition of approximately 400 square kilometres. As a result of the enlarged operational area, effective management and support of the Force's mandated activities, including maritime operations, would require the relocation of the Force's headquarters from Naqoura to Tyre, the reorganization of the two existing sectors in Tibnin and Marjayoun and the establishment of liaison offices in Beirut and Tel Aviv. The Logistics Base in Naqoura will be supplemented by a second base in Tyre and eventually replaced, as the base in Tyre is expanded to full capacity (A/61/588, para. 7).

10. The requested commitment authority in the amount of $263.4 million would provide for the deployment of 14,023 military contingent personnel, 390 international staff and 688 national staff. The Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the requested commitment authority included a provision of $1.8 million for petrol, oil and lubricants to support the deployment of up to 15,000 LAF personnel in southern Lebanon. The Committee was also informed that the requested support for fuel and rations for the LAF would cost approximately $1 million per month and that there was no indication of the duration of the support and that requests from the LAF might be expanded to include other areas; a team from the Strategic Military Cell and the Logistics Support Division at Headquarters was visiting UNIFIL to assess the logistics capacity of the LAF to receive, distribute and account for support provided. When the agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Lebanon was reached on support to the LAF, practical measures to implement that support would be undertaken by the Force with support from the Logistics Support Division. **As indicated above, all of the elements of support have not yet been worked out. The Committee is of the opinion that the nature and extent of support to be provided to the LAF should be clarified before the budget is prepared. The Secretary-General should give the General Assembly an explanation and justification of his plans for the provision of such support.**

11. The Committee notes from paragraph 9 of the report that to facilitate the rapid expansion of UNIFIL, the Secretary-General had granted to the Secretariat, on an exceptional basis, a degree of flexibility in the application of administrative processes governing the assignment of civilian personnel, the deployment of contingents, the extension and increase in the value of support contracts, delegations for financial management and procurement and utilization of exigency provisions within the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and the Staff Rules. These exceptional measures had been taken to facilitate the rapid build-up of civilian support staff, including the use of general temporary assistance provisions to expeditiously reinforce the planning and backstopping capacity at Headquarters and the operational support in the field. Upon enquiring as to the extent to which the flexibilities had been exercised, the Committee was informed that the Secretariat had used the potential troop-contributing countries to assist in the military planning requirement both in UNIFIL and at the Department of Peacekeeping Operations at Headquarters. Additionally, several troop-contributing countries had deployed in advance of the signing of memorandums of understanding and letters-of-assist in accordance with the requested flexibility; the Secretariat would also avail itself of the flexibility to retain staff on temporary duty beyond the normal 90-day period. According to the Secretariat, 58 field service officers and 9 national staff of the Force were currently on temporary duty assignment to other missions. **The Committee encourages UNIFIL to reduce the number of its staff on temporary duty to the extent possible.**

12. The Secretary-General indicates that the existing staff resources for the 2006/07 period under the support account for peacekeeping operations would be insufficient to accommodate the substantial additional surge requirements for the backstopping of UNIFIL. Therefore, the Secretary-General proposes an additional 4 general temporary assistance positions for the Strategic Military Cell at Headquarters. Moreover, an additional 51 general temporary assistance positions would be required to augment the planning and backstopping capacities of the

Department of Peacekeeping Operations (39 positions) and the Department of Management (12 positions). The Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the Strategic Military Cell was staffed mostly by 29 officers from countries contributing troops to UNIFIL who were paid travel expenses and received daily subsistence allowance; the Director of the Cell was the focal point for the provision of strategic military advice on UNIFIL and reported to the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. **The Committee notes that the creation of the Strategic Military Cell reflects an approach that is different from the established structure and practices of the Secretariat and from the usual role of the Military Adviser.**

13. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General (A/61/588, para. 25), the continuing need for the 51 additional general temporary assistance positions at Headquarters for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Management would be re-evaluated in the context of the preparation of the 2007/08 budget for the support account and those positions which were deemed necessary on a longer-term basis would be reflected accordingly in the support account budget. **The Committee points out that the cost of providing backstopping requirements at Headquarters should not be charged, even temporarily, to budgets of peacekeeping operations. The Committee is of the view that the proper procedure is to propose provision of such resources in the context of the budget for the support account for 2007/08. The Committee is also mindful of the significant expansion of UNIFIL and its impact on backstopping at Headquarters. While pointing out that resources are undoubtedly released as the result of closed or downsizing missions, the Committee recognizes that there does exist some immediate need to meet the surge capacity requirements of the support account as a whole, including the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste. The Committee therefore recommends that commitment authority equivalent to half of the amount corresponding to the requested 51 general temporary assistance positions be approved at this time to meet the surge capacity requirements for the support account. Actual requirements for backstopping at Headquarters should be reflected in the performance report for the support account for the financial period 2006/07. As indicated above, the full requirement should be included in the proposed budget for the support account for 2007/08.**

14. **The Committee also points out that adequate information has not yet been provided on the relationship between the additional requirements for backstopping at Headquarters and the short-term support requirements in the field where an additional 100 general temporary assistance positions are proposed to provide immediate and strengthened capacity for the operational, administrative and logistic support of the Force.** The Secretary-General indicates that these 100 short-term surge positions in the field would be required until 31 December 2006, pending the decision of the General Assembly on the proposed provisional staffing establishment of UNIFIL (A/61/588, para. 34). **The Advisory Committee trusts that the next budget for the Force will provide detailed information on the relationship between staffing requirements for backstopping of UNIFIL at Headquarters and short-term surge requirements of the Force in the field (if any).**

15. The report of the Secretary-General also provides for the establishment of a dedicated Conduct and Discipline Team (7 general temporary assistance positions)

and a dedicated Resident Oversight Office (11 general temporary assistance positions); prior to expansion of the Force, the related requirements of UNIFIL were supported by the regional office based in Nicosia. **The Committee will consider the proposed staffing in the context of the proposed budget for UNIFIL.**

16. The Advisory Committee notes from the Secretary-General's report that the requirements for military personnel for the period from 1 July 2006 to 31 March 2007 are estimated at $166.7 million. The cost estimate provides for standard troop cost reimbursement, deployment travel of military contingent personnel, standard recreational and daily allowances, rations, reimbursement for contingent-owned equipment and related freight costs based on the phased deployment of 14,023 troops by 31 March 2007. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that the cost estimates of $166.7 million included obligations for the entire financial period from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007 under a number of budget lines. According to the Secretariat, obligations for the period from 1 April to 30 June 2007 in respect of troop costs, contingent-owned equipment, self-sustainment and death and disability amounted to $3.1 million.

17. Estimated requirements of $38.5 million under civilian personnel costs relate to a proposed provisional civilian staffing component of 446 international staff and 705 national staff, including general temporary assistance positions. **The Committee expects that the next budget submission will provide detailed information on the possible use of United Nations Volunteers.**

18. The Committee observes that the proposed cost estimates for the Force were calculated on the basis of the following assumptions and technical adjustments:

(a) For military contingents: actual deployment for the period from 1 July to 31 October 2006 and a delayed deployment factor of 30 per cent for the period from 1 November 2006 to 31 March 2007;

(b) For international staff: actual deployment for the period from 1 July to 31 October 2006 and a vacancy rate factor of 10 per cent for 119 approved posts and a delayed recruitment factor of 50 per cent for 271 additional posts;

(c) For national staff: actual deployment for the period from 1 July to 31 October 2006, full incumbency for 339 approved national posts and a delayed deployment factor of 40 per cent for 349 additional national posts;

(d) For general temporary assistance positions: a delayed recruitment factor of 40 per cent for 55 international positions at Headquarters and 4 national positions in the field and 50 per cent for 114 international positions in the field.

19. The Committee observes that the cost estimates under national staff have been computed on the basis of the established national staff salary scales (G-5, step 5, and a National Officer (Beirut), step 5). **The Committee is of the view that the average grade level of national staff used for cost estimates appears quite high. The Committee trusts that the next budget submission for UNIFIL will reflect the grade level of national staff that is more commonly used in computation of cost estimates for other peacekeeping operations.**

20. The Advisory Committee notes that the proposed resources of $151.7 million under operational costs provide for the acquisition expenditures related to facilities and infrastructure ($87.0 million), communications ($19.7 million), ground transportation ($16.1 million), information technology ($7.7 million), other

supplies, services and equipment ($6.6 million), general temporary assistance ($4.4 million), medical ($3.3 million), air transportation ($2.2 million), naval transportation ($1.5 million) and special equipment ($1.5 million). The Committee notes from paragraph 43 of the report that negotiations are under way between the United Nations and countries contributing maritime resources.

21. The Committee notes that the provision of $87 million under facilities and infrastructure provides for, inter alia, construction of the Force's new headquarters in Tyre, the Sector East headquarters and four battalion headquarters, as well as for the rental of office space in New York for the Strategic Military Cell and 51 additional Headquarters staff for the administrative backstopping of UNIFIL. **The Committee cautions against extensive and long-term construction projects in the area of operation of the Force, as well as against entering into commitments to rent office space that may not be required in future on the scale currently foreseen. The Committee recommends, in this connection, that all suitable options be studied in cooperation with the Lebanese authorities.**

22. The estimated requirements under communications ($19.7 million) and information technology ($7.7 million) include requirements for the acquisition of commercial communications equipment and accessories, as well as for the acquisition of desktop computers and related accessories for 55 additional personnel at Headquarters in support of the expansion of UNIFIL. **In view of its observation in paragraph 13 above and pending a determination of exact requirements for backstopping to be provided to UNIFIL at Headquarters, the Committee is of the view that a cautious approach should be used with regard to the acquisition of communications and information technology equipment and accessories.**

23. The proposed actions to be taken by the General Assembly in connection with the financing of UNIFIL are contained in paragraph 52 of the Secretary-General's report. **Taking into account its observations and recommendations in the paragraphs above, the Committee recommends that the General Assembly authorize the Secretary-General to enter into commitments for the expansion and maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2006 to 31 March 2007 in the amount of $260.9 million,[1] inclusive of the amount of $50 million previously authorized by the Committee and in addition to the amount of $93.5 million already appropriated under the terms of Assembly resolution 60/278 for the maintenance of UNIFIL for the period from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007. Bearing in mind the cash balance remaining in the special account for UNIFIL as at 27 November 2006, the Committee also recommends that the Assembly approve assessment, at this stage, of 50 per cent of the amount that is approved for commitment for the period from 1 July 2006 to 31 March 2007. The Secretary-General could request a further assessment should the need arise.**

24. **The Advisory Committee points out that care should be taken to avoid any implication that the provision of resources in response to the request for commitment authority in any way implies approval for the establishment of posts or the creation of new functions. The above recommendation for funding is therefore made without prejudice to any recommendations that the Committee may make to the General Assembly when it considers the budget of**

[1] This includes an amount of $2.5 million that will eventually relate to the performance report under the support account (see para. 13 above).

UNIFIL or any decision that the Assembly might take thereon with regard to budgetary and administrative matters, including but not limited to the administrative structure of the Force, its staffing table and operational requirements.